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Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 21 July 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Due to ongoing destabilization and escalating tensions in Occupied Palestine, we are compelled, in follow-up to our letter of 17 July, to once again draw your urgent attention to the situation in Occupied East Jerusalem. Intensifying aggressions against the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power, which today resulted in the death of three Palestinian youths and the injury of nearly 200 other Palestinians, and against holy sites in the City, particularly the Haram al-Sharif, which houses the Aqsa Mosque, are cause for extreme alarm. This situation necessitates immediate efforts by the international community, particularly the Security Council, to stem the dangerous deterioration, avert further volatility and protect civilian life.

The Palestinian leadership thus reiterates its calls for serious action to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to halt immediately and completely its violations of international law, including humanitarian law and human rights law. The occupying Power must be demanded to cease its military aggression against the Palestinian civilian population, including worshippers and peaceful protesters. We decry the loss of innocent civilian life and mourn the death today of the three young Palestinians, who joined the long list of innocent Palestinians killed by this illegal, immoral and brutal occupation in the prime of their lives.

Mohammed Mahmoud Sharaf, aged 18, from the Silwan neighbourhood of Occupied East Jerusalem, was shot and killed by an Israeli settler in Ra's al-Amud. Mohammed Abu Ghanam, aged 20, was shot and killed by Israeli occupying forces during demonstrations following Friday prayers in the Tur neighbourhood of Occupied East Jerusalem. Mohammed Khalaf, aged 17, was shot dead by Israeli occupying forces during a demonstration in the Abu Dis neighbourhood of the City. We condemn the occupation's perpetration of unlawful killings and injuries against our civilians and the terror and extremism of its settlers, and call for full accountability in accordance with international law.

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At the same time, the Palestinian leadership reiterates its condemnation of Israel's provocative, discriminatory and unilateral measures and all the other restrictions recently imposed by the occupying Power at the Aqsa Mosque compound, in violation of the historic status quo and numerous relevant United Nations resolutions and constituting both a blatant aggression against those who wish to worship at the holy sites in East Jerusalem and flagrant violations of the rights of the Palestinian people, including their freedom of worship. We call once again for the cessation of all provocations and incitement regarding the Aqsa Mosque compound and respect for the sanctity of this holy site.

Israel, the occupying Power, must respect the historic status quo at this sacred site and cease all actions that inflame the situation and risk exacerbating heightened religious sensitivities, with potentially grave consequences. Here we recall that, in addition to closing the Aqsa Mosque compound for more than 48 hours last week, the occupying Power closed entrances to the Old City of Jerusalem and prevented Palestinians from entering or leaving the City. Yet at the same time, Israelis and tourists continued to be allowed to enter the Old City and even the compound. Moreover, Israeli occupying authorities placed numerous iron fences around the gates of the Old City to control and obstruct the movement and access of worshippers. After an outpouring of international condemnation, Israeli occupying authorities decided to "partially reopen" the compound to Palestinians; however, an unprecedented, unilateral decision was taken to install electronic gates at the Asbat, Majlis (Nazir) and Silsilah Gates, while closing off the rest of the gates. Because of the measures taken by the occupying authorities, the Waqf employees and Palestinians, both Muslim and Christian, have refused to enter through any of these gates in protest at these latest illegal, unilateral measures.

The occupying Power's actions have created a fertile environment for a renewed cycle of violence and confrontation between defenceless Palestinian civilians and the Israeli military occupying forces. Indeed, Israeli occupying forces have been routinely firing live ammunition, tear gas and rubber-coated bullets at civilians who have been protesting, en masse and peacefully, against Israel's discriminatory, so-called security measures and the ban on Palestinian boys and men under the age of 50 from entering the Haram al-Sharif.

As we have continuously reiterated over the years, Israeli closures and measures regarding the Aqsa Mosque compound should not be seen as isolated events, but rather as part of broader, long-running Israeli policies to alter the character, status and demography of Occupied East Jerusalem and transform it into a Jewish-only city. As such, what is taking place this week cannot be divorced from other incessant illegal policies and practices being carried out by Israel throughout the City and the rest of the West Bank, including its construction and expansion of settlements, demolition of homes, forced evictions and displacement of Palestinian families. Nor can it be divorced from the deep culture of impunity that permeates the ranks of the occupation forces and illegal terrorist settlers who attack Palestinian civilians on a daily basis without consequence or fear of it.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that Israel has been insistently trying to forcibly alter the status of East Jerusalem since the onset of its occupation in 1967, we recall once more that the international community has rightly never recognized Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem and considers it occupied territory. We further reiterate that all illegal Israeli actions at the Haram al-Sharif and throughout the rest of Occupied East Jerusalem constitute violations of the numerous relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), and General Assembly resolutions calling for a cessation of all Israeli policies and measures aimed at altering the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and calling for

respect by the occupying Power for its obligations under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, which explicitly prohibits such actions.

We therefore call upon the international community to vocally condemn these illegal actions by Israel, the occupying Power, and to firmly demand that it immediately cease the measures and provocations that are violating the status quo, stoking religious sensitivities and fuelling the current violence and bloody confrontations. Israel, the occupying Power, must respect the Waqf's custodianship over the entire Aqsa compound, the Palestinian right to free access to the compound, the right of Muslims to worship at the compound without interference and the role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as the custodian of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

Moreover, all measures aimed at altering the demography, character and status of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, must immediately and completely cease, including all such measures affecting the historic status quo at the Haram al-Sharif. This is imperative to stem the deterioration and reverse the dangerous reality on the ground before the situation spirals out of control, and we reiterate our urgent appeal for serious efforts in this regard.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 615 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 17 July 2017 (A/ES-10/757-S/2017/611), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feda **Abdelhady-Nasser**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.